



March 5, 2021 - Written Testimony for SB0770

Thank you, Chairpersons and Committee Members, for allowing me the opportunity to testify in opposition on SB0770. My name is McKenzie Allen and I am the executive director of the Maryland Alliance of Public Charter Schools (also known as MAPCS). MAPCS is a nonprofit organization comprised of charter school operators from across the state. We represent over 21,000 students in 46 schools over six districts.

Our public charter schools, like all public schools, were deeply impacted by the pandemic. Between the abrupt closure of schools, unclear reopening dates, and students and families left in the dark – we saw our already inequitable education systems become even more inaccessible across the state. We, however, saw our public charter school spring into action. Our schools worked hard to use relief and other funds in purchasing tech and connectivity. Our schools found grants and donors and rearranged money, but put tech in the hands of each student. Our public charter schools reported higher rates of students contact, retention, and success in a virtual setting.

The intent of SB0770 is to encourage the continuation of technology usage and integration in schools. That does not rely to the means used in the written legislation and is sure to have dire consequences for all public schools, not just charters. It states that “Providing for the target per pupil foundation amount in fiscal year 2022; requiring each county board of education to use not less than 7% of the target per pupil foundation amount to provide certain technology resources to students; authorizing a local school system, at the end of each fiscal year, to hold unused funds in a special fund to be used in a subsequent fiscal year; requiring a county board that allocates certain funding to follow certain information technology security standards; etc.”

Maryland’s funding for per pupil foundation in FY22 will be \$7,991, so that means that every district must spend \$559.37 per pupil on one of the four tech categories listed or the money will go into holding for spending on another year. A charter school in Maryland receives varying amounts per pupil across the state that each district determines as “commensurate”. These per pupil amounts are, on average over the years, around \$8,000. By reducing that number by \$559.37 per pupil on required tech spending, individual charter schools will lose hundreds of thousands to millions of much needed dollars to pay for facilities, curriculum services, wrap around supports, human capital, and much more. These schools have already developed budgets submitted to each district for FY22 and this legislation could have devastating impact on a charter school’s ability to properly function in the 2021-2022 school year. The small amount they already receive is spread incredibly thin. To reduce it further will have an unbelievably harmful impact on students and communities.

SB0770 also does not take charter schools into consideration around the funding piece. Districts determine what charters get at a per pupil, often withholding pots of money that they will spending on the charter school’s behalf. Sometimes that money is legally required to be withheld, but for others, per legal resolution, charters should be given the opportunity to have a good faith negotiation with district. Ultimately, the district should maximize the money the charters receive in a per pupil and those schools are allowed to spend it at their discretion. This doesn’t always happen. SB0770 does not address whether the money is withheld and spent by the district, or if the funding will be distributed to charter schools on a per pupil basis and spent by the school. This creates intense frustration and tension around the district/charter relationship and could exacerbate the situation mentioned above. This means charter

schools might not receive any benefit from this legislation, losing out on funding and all purchased tech items should the district withhold it. We saw this happen with Chromebooks and hotspots in one district last spring. They distributed devices only to traditional school students, while charters had to figure it out on their own without additional money or opportunity to procure things with flexibility.

We know public charter schools are a beacon for innovation, but by forcing a substantial amount of funding into a restricted pot of money – that they may or may not have access to – does the opposite of the SB0770's intent. This is why we have to oppose SB0770.

If you have any questions or comments, please do not hesitate to reach out. I can be reached at the information below.

Thank you,



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